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## REALISM PURE AND APPLIED

I am persuaded that he who comes to realism in art by way of literary terminology alone will end up in a tangle of talk. Realism is not a mere matter of technic. It is not a mere expression of taste. It is a philosophy, an attitude toward life. It is a mode of thought born of the travail of modern democracy. Under the name of Realism it has taken on the dignity of a philosophic system with a body of doctrine and an honorable array of apologists. It draws its strength from science, and uses as sponsors for its integrity such studies as psychology, anthropology, sociology, and even physiology, whereby we learn how men get their ideas in general, how they are led to hold fast to the customary and the accepted, and how the ideals and standards usually regarded as eternal verities are nothing more than the reflex of man's efforts to keep a footing in a hostile world. In short, the realistic temper ranges over the known world of thought, feeling, and experience to satisfy the imperative desire of seeing things as they are.

My plan is to rescue realism from the tutelage of verbalism by finding in philosophy a conception of realism that can be carried over into the representation of human life in literature and the arts, where like a light behind precious stones it will make the opaque world of fact and experience reveal its inwardness.

The old Irish bards had an effective way of discarding preliminaries and of plunging at once into the theme. "Whence is the death of Conor?" they asked. "Not hard to say," was the answer, and off they started. So I may ask, "Whence is Realism?" But "not easy to say," must be the reply. However, with realism, as with so many other things, the Greeks offer a convenient avenue of approach, especially the author of much later confusion, Plato, who is commonly held to be the first to throw a druidic mist over man's thinking and thus make him doubt the evidence of his senses. As is well known, the world of phenomena is to Plato a poor thing, being but a feeble copy of the idea, which alone was the real. The world of sense bears

about the same relation to the world of eternal ideas as the distorted shadows of men seen moving on a wall do to the passers-by themselves. The reality lies not in the concrete fact of experience but in the region of the mind farthest removed from the senses, where reigns the pure essence of being. The things of earth are but stepping-stones which are soon left behind in the upward ascent. In the *Symposium*, for instance, we are told that fair forms are the lowest rungs in the ladder; beautiful souls are higher; beautiful virtues and sciences still higher, and above them all the pure idea of beauty, bodiless and colorless, and "unclogged with the pollutions of mortality, and all the colors and vanities of human life." Hence, as the readers of the *Republic* will recall, the creations of artists do not imitate the immaterial essence of things in a material reality, but only fashion images of an imperfect phenomenon, which itself is an incomplete copy of a copy. Every existing object on earth has its archetype in the world of Ideas, which is not the sum of qualities abstracted, but the pure essence itself. These essences the souls of men have beheld face to face before they were reborn on earth, and these the artists realize in concrete images according as they regain with purer insight the recollections of their former glory. To Plato and kindred idealists the universe, instead of being a process and a flux, is already completed and for all time established. And truth, unvexed by contact with actualities, sits far off and serene in the supersensual regions of the mind, ringed only with the azure sky. All actions and processes are engulfed in the end, which is the good. And the ultimate appeal of moralistic judgments is to standards that are external to and independent of the accidents and particularities making up the stream of life, to standards that inhere in a universe of order.

In some respects Aristotle stands opposed to Plato and in others he does not. He is opposed in that he appeals to truths realized in outer world to correct and ratify the truths found in dialectics. By inductions gathered from wide reading and observation of various political organizations he formulates the universal terms of an ideal state. By abstracting and harmonizing the concrete tendencies and technical excellences discovered in

the individual plays of Greek tragedians he arrives at a definition of the ideal tragedy. His starting point is not the pure essence but the concrete expression. His preconceptions will prove to be valid, not because they arise in his inner consciousness, because they answer successfully the challenge of the historic process. Hence the first reality is the fact, not the preconception.

But, as with Plato, the ultimate reality is found in the ideal, which, however, never divested itself of form. In all the sensible phenomena of everyday life this ideal manifests itself, but owing to the finiteness and imperfections of life's materials, it can never emerge wholly revealed. The work of the artist then is to help the struggling idea realize itself and complete its expression by removing the dross of accidents and cross-purposes, the encumbrance of "egotism, animalism, and brute matter." In thus shaping the image to the idea, he completes, in the words of Professor Butcher, "nature's unfulfilled purposes and corrects her failures." So it may be noted that Aristotle is no more content than Plato to rest in the material concrete. Though he starts from the fact, he ends in the ideal, which is, despite all sophistical argument, at the pole's opposite of the real. And behind both the real and the ideal is conceived the presence of an end,—the good, which, like a general, marshals all of life's activities and forces, keeping them in line and their faces set towards the goal.

Thus early were launched two possible solutions to the riddle posed to every reflecting man, How shall we take the universe? One proposes that we regard it as a completed existence, superior to all contingency and experience and logical in all its categories and necessities. Change and casualty, death and decay may charge upon it in "thundering troops of warrior horse," but like the waves which spread themselves out to a faint, thin line, they leave no trace of their tumultuous energy. The other proposes that man's adjustments to a shape-shifting world be regarded not as recollections of former existences and approximations to its perfections, but as contributions to the ideal, which will in its appointed time, like the chick from the shell, step out in its finished form. The final answer, however,

is not yet, for the three factors in the situation—the ideal, the concrete fact, and man's mind—will not keep to a static relation.

Now I candidly admit that my simplification of the philosophic systems of both Plato and Aristotle is too easy, that neither of them submits to so sure a circumscription. But how else shall a man escape the charm of their converse unless he boldly cuts himself loose? To cite for examination all the succeeding attempts to fix reality would be both futile and pedantic. They as well as their propounders have gone the way of all flesh; let us not vex their ghosts. After all they have very little to offer us. Like the explanations once given of the sea-shells found in the Alps—the work of the Deluge—the vast majority of metaphysical accounts of reality belong to the discards, the curiosa of philosophic doctrines. Life has moved far beyond them in fulfilling its urge.

The creed of the Realists reads simple enough when stripped to its barest essentials; but like many seeming simplicities it cries for elucidation and displays a wealth of complexity when opened up. When we read the statement that "the new realism is primarily a doctrine concerning the relation between the knowing process and the thing known," we are at its very heart. To be more explicit, the realists hold that things known "are not products of the knowing relation, nor necessarily dependent for their existence or behavior upon that relation." Behind this statement lurks the uneasy ghost, which long has haunted the academic groves, though it seldom appears to the man of the street,—Do objects exist independent of mind? In their reply the new realists affirm that when mind discovers a new law, quality, or character, it in no way creates these entities. When scientists bring to light new elements or relations, they can lay no claim to being the intellectual progenitors of their discoveries; they but uncover to view what has already been in existence far back in the past and will reach far forward into the future. The gradual building up of a body of detail through experiment and verification, the accumulating knowledge of the nature, functions, and habits of things alter not one jot the absolute independence of the resultant finding. The only service mind can render them is to make them objects of cognition. In all probability there

will ever remain a residual unknown, some relation, quality, or function resisting exposure, which nevertheless will persist in its separate identity and will operate in its character so long as the terms of its existence abide unchanged, regardless whether man brings it into the field of consciousness. It would exist, be true or false, even though man never evolved.

Where this doctrine affects material objects and the objective sciences, assent is easy. But where it affects laws and theories, especially those involving human conduct and moralistic judgments, there it is that men close their eyes and refuse to be led. The Irish turf cutter, for instance, chancing upon the Brooch of Tara in a bog, the geologist facing a petrified tree in a sea-worn cliff, the miner laying bare with his pick the metamorphosed life of the Carboniferous age, the astronomer gazing upon a new planet that "has swum into his ken"—each and all, in the widest extension of their ego, would not presume to believe that they stood in a causal relation to the things thus come into their perception. Likewise with the laws that deal with the physical properties of matter. When a man of genius sights amidst the familiar what has always been true but never formulated, when a Newton grasps the significance of a falling apple as obeying the law which holds the universe together and "keeps the heavens from going wrong," what has he done except to bring into the knowing relationship what heretofore unnoticed by us has been operating surely and tirelessly since the world began, and will maintain its course after the last man has drawn his feet into his bed and departed to his fathers? Apples will continue to fall to the ground, suns hold planets in their orbits, and stars keep to their courses even though mind had never worded the law of gravitation. Such a relation or law is real because it is independent in its being and workings of the knowing faculty, though not necessarily out of relation to knowledge, for then it could never become known. It is possible that the ultimate nature of matter will forever elude us, that like Achilles overtaking the tortoise we shall constantly reduce the distance but never overcome it. For though we succeed in exhausting thoroughly the structural possibilities of a subject or object, we shall always be faced with determining new connections.

Botany, it seems, has revealed all that it has to show in the way of morphology. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that we are done with botany, for it has now become a matter of chemistry. So with the problems of the universe. Radio-activity has immeasurably lengthened our progress to the outermost boundaries of knowledge. The explorers on the frontiers report that "all known kinds of ordinary matter may be undergoing slow transformations," and they are working towards the conclusion that inanimate matter may be submitting to an evolutionary process not unlike that operating in organic life. It is possible that science may rest its case in the statement that all mass may prove to be electrical or fall under some great simplifying concept like that of ether. Whether time returns a verdict of proven or not proven, the chief thing here to be borne in mind is that all things unknown are knowable, and only to this degree are they dependent on mind. It matters not to the adrenal glands that we have found out how largely they assist in the bodily changes produced by hunger, pain, fear, and whether we had eyes to see or ears to hear, colors and sounds would still exist as vibrations and wave lengths. The fact of discovery or non-discovery neither makes them nor unmakes them; they have merely met the accident, likely to befall anything, of having been drawn into the knowing relation. What we have done is no more than to have penetrated into their world.

As I have said above, the doctrine that "the nature of things is not to be sought primarily in the nature of knowledge" would be generally accepted if it limited its control to matters objectively scientific and materialistic. But let it once reach out toward matters non-verifiable, crystallized opinions and customary beliefs, then man passionately rejects all offers of assistance in establishing his bearings proffered by realism. The inhibitions paralyzing his mental activities are numerous and complex. Notable among them is a fear of the consequences, a fear that is usually unacknowledged; a fear lest mind suffer a loss of dignity and supremacy when made to co-exist on a level with objects—a fear of the wholesale rejection, imposed by realism, of all manner and degree of subjectivities, monisms, anti-intellectualisms, mysticisms, dualisms, and idealisms—a fear of the *a posteriori*, in short, a fear of thought, a fear of truth.

Some people base their opposition to the de-anthropomorphizing temper of realism on the plea of temperamental incompatibility; they say that they are by nature mystics or idealists. How far they are substituting personal idealization for social heredity is a lead that cannot here be followed up. To such people realism appears to dethrone mind, and by placing it on a level with physical existences with respect to independence and reality, to rob it of its value and service and its divinity. Such an attitude is not in accordance with the spirit of democracy; those who believe it right for mind to be subsidized would believe it right for individuals to be artificially advantaged at the expense of the mass. In assigning to mind and objects their "due measure of self-existence," realism does no more than secure to each equal opportunity to rise to the height of its powers. In the realistic world, then, mind starts out from the same plane as everything outside of it. But by virtue of its innate abilities it infinitely outdistances its fellow-existences; by virtue of its superior endowments, its power of including other worlds in its own, it attains to a far more complete and perfect mode of being, but not, be it noted, to one more real. If the latter term were freed of the confusion with completeness and perfection, value and service, then the basic cause of apprehension should disappear.

The problem of disarming the idealists and their kin is rich, I admit, with the promise of failure. To separate idealists from their idealisms and mystics from their mysticisms is equivalent to removing the ground from under their feet, especially when the main concern of their lives is not to-night's bed and to-morrow's bread. (I would append here as a footnote that idealism consorts naturally with plenty and realism with hunger.) It is a problem, not of reconciling direct opposites, but of setting up two separate identities, one having its roots in fact, the other in mind. To the idealistic creed that "mind is always a world and objects are always fragments," the realists oppose the creed that "there is a world of objects capable of existing independently of the knower." It is the old opposition of aristocracy and privilege with democracy and equal opportunity. If realism wins, then goodbye to justification by faith, for we must abandon the *a priori* basis for determining the nature of things and the



definitions of their terms. All contentions for the rule of the universe by moral or divine principles have no more validity than that for the divine right of kings. These must take their stand in line with the plebeian mass of objects and facts and await their turn for judgment. All the high and mighty abstractions—time, space, immortality, and even the dread, shadowy presence cognition—must brush elbows with the grimy phenomena of the natural world. The knower himself must stand before the inexorable Rhadamanthus of Analysis in company with the things he knows. It is true that he may win to a larger relative reward, be invited to sit up higher, yet he must ever face the humiliating fact that he exists in a world of objects no less independent than tables and chairs, but no more so. For he in turn, “in some cosmos, may be an object of thought, something which cognition plays upon and apprehends.” Who knows but that to some order of intelligences the knowing faculty of man may be as external an object of thought as are the stars to us?

In addition to the opposition between the realist and the idealist indicated above, there exists another equally antipodal, namely, the nature and manner of their mental processes. Psychoanalysts describe two kinds of thinking—one a thinking with directed attention, the other a dream or fantasy thinking. The first is so named because it is set toward following out some idea or solving some problem. Starting from an inward distress over, say, some mal-adjustment, it soon issues into words or diagrams and other concrete forms, addressed at first to the thinker himself, and then, as it gains shape and significance, it becomes informed with the desire to reach out to others. It is sprung into action by the need of facing and adapting real, that is, existing, conditions, which call for all sorts of innovations and adjustments. In the mechanics of its procedure it imitates the succession of objectively real things so that the images in our minds follow after each other in the same causal succession as the historical events outside of our mind.” Concerned with real elements it becomes reality thinking, and following the lead of a major idea it becomes directed thinking. Working with speech elements, however, is troublesome and exhaustive, as anyone knows who tries to put his impressions into definite

shape. As G. T. Patrick asserts in his *Psychology of Relaxation*, the faculties of association, voluntary attention, concentration, and analysis are late developments, which easily tire. Hence our pleasure in slipping back to the dream or unreal world, where these faculties are not exercised.

The second kind of thinking eschews reality, draws back to the region of the suppressed wish, which it sets free in fantasies and day dreams. In place of actively participating in the world of affairs, it rests content in the world of imaginings, employing its architectonic sense in building "castles in Spain." Instead of words and diagrams, images and feelings occupy the field of consciousness, creating a delightful world of make-believe, a world not as it is but as one would have it be, wherein one is all that he is not in reality. The materials it uses are in part of the future but mostly of the past. Old memory scenes are reenacted with an outcome, to adopt Bacon's remarks on poetry, "of a more ample greatness, a more exact goodness, and a more absolute variety than can be found in the nature of things." Because daily life represents events in the ordinary round of existence, this dream world, like poesy, "endueth them with rareness and more unexpected and alternative variations." Its delectability lies in the fact that it "submits the shows of things to the desires of the mind." The fulness and satiety of satisfaction thus engendered tend both to inhibit action and to induce acquiescence in the current state of existence. Since this dream-thinking is not directed to a controlling idea struggling to realize form but drifts back and forth in the eddies of desire, it escapes the exhaustion which attends wrestling with the demands of the day. With its winding current flowing down the pleasant land of drowsihead, it affords an easeful escape for the man wearied with seeking the things won by toil and compulsion. The mind that lives in Romances, dream pictures, and make-believe worlds is not concerned with seeing things as they are, with getting hold of the how and the why of this earth. It prefers to play around subjective fantasies, which are more easily manipulated, and which make up the mythological world of the child and the savage. Such a psychical life is a prolongation of an earlier state of human culture; it is a "reëcho of the prehistoric and

ancient." Tennyson then did not speak the whole truth nor even the essential truth when he said, "Dreams are true while they last." Nietzsche saw better. "In our sleep and in our dreams," he says, "we pass through the whole world of earlier humanity." To glimpse the inward nature of our romantic dream life is not to belittle the power of its intrusion into the work-a-day world. A knowledge of the vast domain lying below the line of consciousness is a most timely aid in the understanding of the contradictions and perplexities ever interjecting themselves into the life of reason. They make the warp to the woof or reality.

In the romantic world of the dreamers there is no place for that happy phrase of Matthew Arnold's "seeing a thing as it is." In what manner this formula is barred from operating in that world will appear upon an analysis of the content and implications of the phrase. The great hindrance to a man's seeing things in their reality is the idealistic tendency to run all things and their attributes back to mind without discriminating between those qualities that are subjective to him and those that exist independent of him. How far he is sunk in the habit of investing entities with life that is a reflection from his own personality is well summed up in Amiel's epigram, "Landscape is a state of mind." If one could see the landscape divested of the coloring laid on it by the arrogance and vanity of mind, he could leap and exclaim with the blind man whose eyes Christ had opened, "Whereas I was blind, now I can see!" Probably few of us are capable of such objectivity. It is an axiom in geometry, "things equal to the same thing are equal to each other." If the various objects entering into a landscape are independent and real in their existence, then their arrangement into a totality should be independent and real. But, as the new realism goes on to show, landscape when a matter of cognition is an existence outside though compresent with mind and as such is a fragment. Only when seen with its fringe is it a world. In fact, all objective existences are surrounded with fringes of which a portion is thrown out by the thing experienced and a portion conferred on it by the experiencing mind. Naturally the more richly an intellect is endowed with responsiveness to the world of objective

fact the more wide and variegated will be the extension of the object and the mass of cohering experiences and mental suggestions constituting its world. But owing to the fact that mind is a selective agent and reaches out only in the direction it is interested in, it never sees the fact or object in its complete existence or stripped down to its bare selfhood. Anatole France brings it as a charge against past writers of history that they present facts "denuded of the greater part of their special circumstances that constitute them," asserting that a fact is something extremely complex (as truly it is), possessed of no absolute boundaries. Again the appearance of a table varies according to the selective act into which it is thrown, and this selective act varies with the individual, with the mood, with the association, and with the purpose prompting the act. If we could see it without its fringe we should see it in its essence as tableness. But usually perception takes in its squareness or roundness, its color, its polish, its size, its height, weight, and material, all of which are physical properties that owe no allegiance to mind. Or our selection of qualities may be subjective, such as its beauty or ugliness, its grace or clumsiness, its harmony with other objects of furniture, its associations with the past, its commonness or rareness, its price, all of which, on the other hand, are man-made categories, emanations from the mind, whose existence is no more stable than the immortality of the dead in Maeterlinck's *Bluebird*. Or perception may choose to view it in its setting of space and time, with which all things are continuous. Finally both the educated and the uneducated minds see things in the light of something else—the one because of a sensitiveness to relations, the other because of lack of detailed knowledge.

While the appearances of things are a part of their real character, the trouble is that to the non-realists they too often stand for the selfhood of the thing or concept. The stick in the water looks bent. If we follow out the doctrine of realism, this appearance of crookedness is real, for refraction is not a quality conjured up by mind, but is a law of nature that operates invariably when the conditions repeat themselves. But the perceived object is not the touched object, which we know retains its character

of straightness unchanged. Again a painting gives rise to an impression of distance and solidity and a statue to one of mobility. These in truth are part of the real character of the perceived object, but not of the touched object. The one we know to be a flat surface and the other a block of stone. In such instances, however, the illusions are not disturbing, for they can be easily removed. They are real attributes of the concepts of painting and statue, but not of canvas, paint, and marble, and their importation into the fringe of these objects does not lead such things to forfeit their self-existence and individuality. As ideas they maintain an existence that is as independent and real as the very objects they cohere with, for they too can be experienced by the knowing faculty. But let it not be forgotten that they are still ideas.

To see things as they are it is just as necessary to view them in their naked state as fragments as garbed with their relationships and significance. As I have pointed out above, the difficulty with the brood of Platonists, in fact, with all those types which hold that objects owe their reality to characters that live only in a medium of mind, is that they are either incapable or unwilling to draw aside the intervening fringes, which, like curtains of gauze let down before a scene, make an investiture of color and softness quite external to the reality. They will build palaces of Justice and palaces of Peace; they will erect monuments to Liberty and go to war for Democracy. And lulled to inaction by this virtuous discharge of their emotions, they have no ears for the cries of those unjustly dealt with, denied their liberties and the practice of democratic ways of living. They surrender themselves to a Philosophy of Loyalty as to a mystic presence, and immersed in its divine immanence they find complete satisfaction of their æsthetic instincts and their sentimental adoration of the fine things. Absorbed in the beauty of the abstract they lose sight of the actual world profit and greed fattening on this worship of the Idea. For them the ideal of honor is living up to a contract obscures with its glowing aureole the hideous poverty, disease, and rickety children frequently involved as a corollary. For them Truth and Justice and Liberty count for more than true things, just dealings, and free lives.

Maeterlinck, in one of his moments of vision, says, "No physical justice ever proceeded from moral causes, whether it presented itself under the form of heredity, illness, or atmospheric, geologic, or any other phenomena unimaginable." And Anatole France, in his memorable words at the grave of Zola, entered into the heart of things when he said, "There is no peace but in justice, no rest but in truth. I do not speak of philosophic truth, the object of eternal disputes, but of this moral truth which we all can seize because it is sensible and relative and conformable to our nature, and so near us that a child can touch it with his hand." So long as man believes in a universe ruled by an absolute moral order instead of a moral order as a cult worked loose from group reactions; so long as he considers himself a sinful, imperfect being falling away from an ideal standard which has attained to its fulness without waiting to see how the living type would turn out; and so long as he uses as a starting-point the will and the intellect in place of the emotions and feelings—just so long will he miss coming to a face-to-face view of himself as he really is. As a modern psychologist says, man's great problem is "the adaptation of himself to reality and the recognition of himself as the instrument for the expression of life according to his individual classibilities." The penalty of man's refusal to adapt himself to biology, psychology, sociology is his failure to become self-creating and self-determining, consequent upon his lack of knowing the springs of action and feeling. The wall that stands between himself as perceived and himself as real is the wall of rigid intellectual and moral formulas.

As objects of consciousness, then, the illusion of form and life bestowed by mind on paintings and statues have as real an existence as has the material itself. The point to be remembered is that the two existences are separate and distinct; one cannot be taken for the other or the one for the whole. In the realm of human reactions and moral valuations the ratio between what may be called perceived reality and touched reality may be illustrated by the ratio between ideality and actuality, between defining things in terms of what one would have them be and in terms of their current mode of being and performance. Tagore proclaims his belief that "there is a universal standard of justice

to which all men irrespective of their caste and color have their equal claim." But it is the actual rendering of justice that concerns the man caught in the grip of the law. The ideal of America as "the land of the free and the home of the brave," the refuge of the oppressed, sits ill on the America that hurries madly on after efficiency and success. Here the idealist interrupts with, "Oh, but the ideal is the real. The actual is temporary and perishable, seen only in its momentary aspects, never twice alike, full of accidents and cross purposes bewildering as they are numerous. But in them all is inherent the tendency to grow to the fulness of their perfect form. In accordance with our vision of what they are destined to become, we remove the disfiguring, repressing, and thwarting forces incident to mortality and finiteness, and thus allow them to win to the goal of their striving, their final perfection. This ideal is indestructible and unchangeable and therefore the only real." A throw-back to Plato, you see. Meanwhile the Mooneys are condemned to death on perjured testimony; the champions of freedom of speech are martyred under ferocious sentences; and children see their youth flit by from the windows of factories and in darkness of mines. The same confusing of identities leads him to speak of a man's worse self and his better self, equating the latter with his real self, as if there were degrees of reality. Whereas the realist would merely say that in this situation the man behaved in one way and in that situation he behaved in another. One self is as real as the other and neither can be substituted for the other.

Of this idealistic temper are born such conceptions as those sweetly melancholy landscapes to be found in Mid-Victorian editions of the poets, for instance, which were composed of ideal trees, winding brooks, distant church towers, and peaceful vales; and those sentimental songs, also touched with a tender sadness, which sung in pleasing generalities about—

". . . a lone green valley on the old Kentucky shore,  
Where I've whiled many happy hours away;  
A-sitting and a-singing by the little cottage door  
Where lived my darling Nellie Gray."

The same belief in a "true idea" latent in a phenomenon and waiting to be expressed creates such harmonious pictures as

"The Arabs' Charge," in which are assembled all the impressions of movement, dress, carriage, and gesture that cling to our notions of the wild, undisciplined sons of the desert and the fiery Arabian steeds. In our admiration for such magnificent movement and freedom we lose sight of the fact that the charge may contain nothing admirable; it may be bent solely on ruthless destruction of what has taken ages to build. Another picture typifying an harmonious unity and a completion of tendencies is the one which has been featured so widely in our recruiting campaigns, "The Spirit of Seventy-Six." Everything in the composition expresses the indomitable temper of the husbandmen dropping their plowshares to assume arms against the invader. But somehow its dash and vigor fall suddenly flat against the end-result—the picture of a soldier with his face shot away, a picture which Dr. Crile insists should always accompany the other.

The romanticist, because of his indisposition toward directed thinking, shuns the close-up view of life, preferring to see things composed into a picture and brought into harmony by the magical power of distance, which, in the words of Scott, smoothes all asperities, reconciles all incongruities, veils all absurdness, and softens every coarseness. He would agree with Scott that incidents tolerable or even pleasing as sketches would become, if seen in close detail, "like a finished Dutch picture, brutal and boorish." Scotch psalmody, for instance, to a bystander is made up of grunts and snuffles, whines and screams; whereas to one sufficiently removed it would resolve itself into "that deep and distant sound, which rising and falling like the Æolian harp, may have some title to be called the praise of our Maker." In the two pictures of a ship, one of—

"When she was lying hoggish at the quay,  
And men ran to and fro,  
And tugged, and stamped, and shoved, and pushed, and swore,  
And ever and anon with crapulous glee,  
Grinned homage to viragoes on the shore,

and the other of when—

" . . . . a shadow of repose  
Upon a line of gray,  
She sleeps, that transverse cuts the evening rose—



She sleeps and dreams away,  
Soft blended in a unity of rest  
All jars, and strifes obscene, and turbulent throes,  
'Neath the broad benediction of the West,"

the poet, T. E. Brown, finely illustrates this modifying power of distance. To each picture the doctrine of realism would allow its due measure of independence and reality. At the same time realism would remind us of the fact that unity of rest and resolution of jars and obscenities are qualities conferred on the ship by the mind of the beholder. Even though she does appear to be a "shadow of repose upon a line of gray," she still bears her load of human brutes. Life aboard her has not changed for the better merely because seen in her present relation to sky and water she has become a thing of beauty.

To poetry preëminently belongs the power of lulling us into dream states wherein we rest content in the emotional glow evoked by the charm of words. Should not the "Charge of the Six Hundred," so aptly described in the phrase "magnificent but not war," instead of kindling our imaginations to white heat, rather stand as an eternal rebuke to blunder and waste of life? Do we ordinarily look upon mere physical and automatic response of men, the result of mechanical drill, as deserving of immortality? Are the finest hopes of the race to be built upon those of whom we recite—

"Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die"?

Or should not humanity entrust its future to that type of mind whose possibilities led Hamlet to exclaim, "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in apprehension how like a god!" The false glamor that is exhaled by a last act of gallantry and soldier-like obedience to the death has always found an easy lodgment in the romantic and idealistic minds. To such an account as that of Cranmer's death they respond with their whole being:—

"He passed out smiling, and he walked upright;  
His eye was like a soldier's, whom the general  
Hath rated for some backwardness and bidden him  
Charge one against the thousand, and the man  
Hurls his soiled life against the pikes and dies."

Yet when these lines are brought to the bar of thought and made to yield up their inwardness, how do they show up? His act of backwardness may have been some neglect of the daily routine confining the life of a soldier, some breach of military etiquette, or the play of reason upon some conventional command. Would that make a soiled life? Is an ineffectual death a rational equation for so mean an offence? What can one man accomplish against a thousand? What should we think of a general who makes sport of a life that has as sacred a right to a continuance as his own? And as for the eye of a soldier—photographs taken of men whose whole being was set upon killing have led some medical scientists to affirm that the expression indicates a throw-back to the far distant stage of brute ancestry.

These criticisms are not the offspring of a flippant and captious spirit. They are the irrepressible urge of the democratic temper of realism, which orders everything from the myriad-minded Shakespeare to the sentimental balladist, from a lofty ideal to a humble chair, from God Himself to a crawling worm, to stand in its own place and on its own legs. In admitting that some entities are infinitely richer in meaning, contacts, and usefulness, it will not permit these to stifle under their mighty shadow the growth and integrity of lesser values. If it is hostile to idealisms, "vital lies," and romantic illusions, it is so because of its solicitude for life truly full and free. It will not succumb to the spell which poetry and romance weave about deeds of valor and heroism, loyalty and submission, without first inquiring into the losses entailed by dislocations and severed connections, and into the sincerity and righteousness animating the motives. If six hundred men are to exchange life for death at a mere word of command, realism would stipulate for some more solid compensation than a poem, or an æsthetic thrill, or an apotheosis of an ideal. Too long have we been at the mercy of metaphors. It is time that we see things as they are. Against Drake and Hawkins, the great captains of the Armada fame should be set Drake and Hawkins, the hireling buccaneers and ruthless plunderers of the Irish sea-towns. Against New England and Faneuil Hall should be set New England who traded in rum for the enslavement of the wretched Africans. Against Kitchener, the organizer of

the British army, Kitchener, the spoiler of the tomb of the Mahdi and the "butcher of Omdurman." Give to each entity its due measure of self-existence, says realism, but no more; let not the fringe hide the fact or part of the fringe pose as the whole.

Because realism is democratic, it must concern itself with the poor and meek in spirit, with the plain, the ugly, and the sordid, in fact, with all of life's neglected. Thoroughly at one with such a temper, Gorky writes his autobiography, "with all its oppressive horrors of our wild Russian life." "It is worth while," he says, "because it is actual vile fact, which has not died out, even in these days—a fact which must be traced to its origin, and pulled up by the roots from the memories, the souls of the people, and from our narrow sordid lives." It is the frequency with which realism, like the Good Samaritan, bestows its offices on the vulgar, the commonplace, and the ill-smelling that inspires the charge of its being "homesick for the mud," and compels the sensitive of nostril to pass by on the other side. It is probably true that realism is not necessarily, perhaps not even ordinarily, involved with beauty, though what we mean by beauty might affect the verdict. There is no doubt, however, that it frequently falls short of affording that complete satisfaction of the æsthetic instinct which usually is the essence of reactions to the great traditional works of art. A scene reflected in a pool of water may suggest an effect of artistry better than the original itself, due to the lowering of tones and the lessened brilliancy of light. And perhaps Wilde is right in his statement that the sorrows of Hecuba please us because Hecuba is nothing to us. However that be, realism makes for force but not necessarily for beauty. At the same time the softening and modifying tendency may work towards keeping us from seeing injustice and wrong-doing, because moved by the harmony, charm, and beauty of the presentation we come to think of the end as justifying the situation. In his *Decay of Lying*, Wilde dismisses Zola's characters from consideration on the ground that "their dreary vices and their drearier virtues, the record of their lives are absolutely without interest. Who cares what happens to them? In literature we require distinction, charm, beauty, and

imaginative power. We don't want to be harrowed with an account of the doings of the lower orders." Farther on he says, "What is interesting about people in good society is the mask that each one of them wears, not the reality that lies behind the mask." "The only beautiful things . . . are the things that do not concern us." The world would wait long if it depended on the Wildes to stir people to removing the excrescences that offend the senses of the æsthete. Yeats, too, frankly confesses to no pretense at realism; in fact, he wants to get away from life. To quote from *Ideas of Good and Evil*: "I would like to see a poetical drama which tries to keep at a distance from daily life that it may keep its emotions untouched, staged with but two or three colors." And he foresees the day when convention and decoration and ceremony will dominate. Whether his work gains or loses by allying itself with the mystical, the decorative, and the lyrical, thus cutting itself loose from the warmth of the struggle of life, may be left to the individual whose æsthetic and moral predilections are best satisfied thereby. His vision is plainly unreal and will not break upon the plain man, who will far more readily tie himself up with the obstacles blocking the career of *Maurice Harte* and disintegrating the moral being of the family in Lenox Robinson's *The Harvest*. Granting that "the earth is only a little dust under our feet," we should still have to perpetuate suffering, poverty, disease, and justice for the sake of the beauty that may be distilled from the pathetic and the tragic. In keeping our eyes on the ends of the earth, we miss much of what is going on by our side; and we ask people to continue to bear their lot in patience so that beauty, strangeness, and mystery may brood in their nest undisturbed.

Quite opposed is the artistic purpose of the modern Irish realists like Lenox Robinson, T. C. Murray, Padraic Colum, and St. John Ervine. In reply to a complaint uttered by some woman admirer of the old order of Irish fiction, where the men were all generous and impulsive and the women all beautiful and virtuous, the last-named author pointed out that tragedy had always been in Irish life and comedy in the representation of it. He defended the absence of the laughter-loving, sentimental Celt by reference to the facts of Irish provincial life. Ireland

was essentially a nation of peasants. From this fact issued all of the vitality, color, weakness, gray tones, all of the vigor and clash of personalities. The Irishman has national courage and meanness, cowardice and nobility, humor and the lack of it, cruelty and gentleness, generosity and greed, wit and dullness. Add to these a life subordinated to the passion of money-getting. Their comedy and tragedy should represent balked lives, because such is the stuff of their lives. If the decline of the spirit and the growth of materialism in Ireland are to be combated, they must first be recognized. Similarly Patrick MacGill urged in defence of his *Ratpui* that exposure to sunlight was good for the social ills of Ireland.

Other critics shy at realism in art because it seemingly neglects to inform with deep spiritual significance the ignoble happenings of petty lives. Such an observation is in truth a witness to the writer's fidelity to his vision. I refer to the attitude of objectivity and impersonality which Flaubert asserted should constrain an artist, forbidding him to confide his feelings, his ideas and his convictions, and his state of mind. "What you write," he says in speaking of *Madame Bovary*, "is not for yourself but for others. Art has nothing to do with the artist. He must manage to lead posterity to think that he never lived at all. The less idea I can form of him the greater he seems to me." Truly not a warm-hearted creed, and one unnecessarily severe. To us to-day Flaubert is as interesting as *Madame Bovary*. Equally objective and impersonal was the attitude of his pupil De Maupassant, who has been accused of being irrelevant and heartless in his treatment of life. One critic asserts that his incidents and situations have no pertinency and reveal no philosophy of life; that his preoccupation with the mean, trivial, and drab tends to induce too much respect for these qualities, and that he loves the mal-odorous for its own sake. To those seeking in art a rearrangement of life's elements into a less disturbing pattern, De Maupassant does display an unfeeling indifference to the miseries of existence. Superficially these charges are to the point. His story called *A Life* presents a picture of an old woman, duped in every relation, a long road on which people go up and down, listless days—all with no purpose,

no meaning. *Butterball* shows a precious collection of as heartless and selfish representatives of the leisure class as ever rode in coach and four. In neither does the author reveal his feelings and sympathies. Impassive as the Sphinx he lets the life he records unroll itself as it will. He tells these things because they are so, and by isolating them from the tangled skein of human beings, circumstances, and impulses, he, in common with all artists, enables us to see them. What we shall do with them depends on how we take the universe.

To my way of thinking much of the discussions on realism lack vitality and direction because they are held in bondage to literary terminology. They savor too much of scholastic disputes. Moreover realism has been limited too largely to matters technical and æsthetic. Doubtless the employment of the actual speech of men and the discard of letters, rings, handkerchiefs, monologues, timely uncles, and telltale housemaids make for a presentation more nearly like to the conditions of life. But this is not all. To see things as they are man must know things. To know things he must keep abreast of advancing knowledge and be ready to cast off convictions, moralities, and codes of conduct into the closet of wornout ideas. He must be attentive to the processes of life both as interpreted by creative observers and as explained by scientists. For instance, to measure man by the standards of absolute morality is as belated as to hold that the thick skulls of the Australian Bushmen are the survivals of those females whose heads were too solid to be beaten in. And to maintain that art may deal with only a restricted field of material is on a par with the theory that giraffes got their long necks from incessant reaching into high trees. Truths are mobile, plastic things, or as expressed more whimsically by the Irishman James Stephens, "No truth in regard to space and time can retain its virtue longer than the beating of an artery; it too has its succession, its sidereal tide, and while you look upon it, hardy and round as a pebble, it is split and fissured and transformed." To be a realist one must be an open-minded empiricist, ready to admit with the scientist that any entity may exist or subsist, in fact that everything experienced is real and independent. The only limitations acceptable are the *a posteriori*.

Since art is mainly busied with representing "man in action," the artist who would truly depict human life must learn to see man in his most primary relation, namely, his biological. Thus viewed his instincts are no longer things reprehensible; they are powers and expressions, which in themselves are neither good nor bad, except as man happens to find them becoming visible in one or the other of these categories. Modern psychology of the school of Freud and Jung is doing splendid service in sweeping away the prurient notion that these things are "unclean, vile, unspeakable, and unholy," and in correcting the mistakes made by mankind under the influence of religion and social convention "through warping and distorting the fundamental instincts of sexuality, thinking thus to subdue its imperious domination." No artist can claim to be a realist where it counts for most who does not recognize that the energy stored up in the "libido" is in the service of life, which regards with indifference whether it heads for "destruction and waste, dissipation and futile purposes," or is directed into constructive ends. If the play of the instincts turned out badly for Anna Karenina, it was not because they were immoral; they were but fulfilling their nature, which Aristotle says is the end of things. Could they have articulated with the world as man has organized it, they would have made for happiness, for they were fraught with tremendous possibilities for fuller life. They owe nothing to mind but their coloring and the experience of becoming known. They are rooted, not in morality but in organic life, and their reality lies in their psychological manifestations and their biological relations. In the new realism philosophy and science have joined hands. This is the realism I would see imported into criticism and art.

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